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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

21 November 1984

GRENADA: ELECTION PROSPECTS

Summary

As Grenada approaches its first national election in eight years on 3 December, the campaign has boiled down to a contest between a three-party centrist coalition called the New National Party (NNP) and the rightwing Grenada United Labor Party (GULP) of autocratic and corrupt former Prime Minister Eric Gairy. On the basis of two public opinion polls, the NNP--led by 66-year old Herbert Blaize--appears to have garnered sufficient popular support to win the election. Gairy, nonetheless, has enough loyal followers to enable his party to win at least a few seats. We do not expect other centrist candidates to be a factor. The left is represented by the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement (MBPM), but it has little popular support and is unlikely to win any seats.

The newly elected government will face several challenges in the coming months. Most pressing will be the need to revitalize the economy and to maintain the unity of the NNP coalition since

This memorandum was requested by the Deputy-Assistant Secretary of State for Caribbean Affairs. It was prepared by Middle America-Caribbean Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Information as of 20 November 1984 was used in the preparation of this paper. Comments and queries are welcomed and should be addressed to Chief, Middle America-Caribbean Division,

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we expect differences over power sharing to resurface after the election. Moreover, the presence in Parliament of an opposition represented by GULP members could further undermine the effectiveness of the new government if Gairy follows his past practice of using obstructionist tactics. Continued Cuban guidance and funding will help the MBPM [redacted]

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[redacted] to take advantage of any post-election discontent to cultivate opposition to the new government. Should Gairy's party unexpectedly win, we believe his tactics and objectives would stir social unrest and political violence much the same as in his previous terms. [redacted]

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Background

For the past 12 months, Grenadians have been trying to maintain order, reestablish a political system, and lay the groundwork to revitalize the economy, all of which collapsed in the violent downfall of Maurice Bishop and his leftist regime in October 1983. The population has been slow to recover from those events and reconstruction has been faltering. Consequently, the national election on 3 December will be a political watershed for Grenada, marking a return to the parliamentary democratic system that had been circumvented for almost 20 years, first by the repressive administration of Eric Gairy and then by the leftist regime of Maurice Bishop. [redacted]

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Election Preparations and Participants

The nine-member Advisory Council that has served as an interim government in Grenada since November 1983 has followed a deliberate pace in the implementation of a new electoral system. The first stage of the electoral process began last April with the enumeration of voters to update 1976 lists. Completed in June, over 90 percent of the electorate--some 47,000 voters--were registered. [redacted]

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[redacted] many of those refusing to participate were leftist sympathizers. Despite the small size of Grenada's legislature--only 15 seats are at stake--52 candidates will compete in the 3 December election. Nomination day on 14 November marked the official opening of the 19-day campaign. [redacted]

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After a year of vigorous political activity by a variety of hopefuls, the NNP--a coalition of moderates--and Gairy's GULP--the rightwing party that ruled Grenada for over 20 years--have emerged as the main contenders for power.¹ The NNP is led by Herbert Blaize of the Grenada National Party (GNP), and also includes George Brizan's National Democratic Party (NDP), and Francis Alexis' Grenada Democratic Movement (GDM). Because none of the centrist parties appeared to have enough support on its own to beat Gairy's GULP, the moderates came under pressure from local businessmen and leaders of neighboring Caribbean governments to form an electoral alliance to broaden their appeal. Basic disagreements about power sharing led to the failure of a coalition effort in May. Only when the Prime Ministers of Barbados, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent intervened in late August and lobbied directly with Grenadian party leaders did they succeed in fashioning an agreement. The NNP is running on a pro-US, liberal democratic platform and its slate of candidates consists of eight members from the GNP, four from the NDP, and three from the GDM. []

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Although Gairy has announced that he will not run in the election, the US Embassy reports that he plans to have one of his proxy candidates resign so that he can win the seat in a by-election. Reporting from the US Embassy and the results of opinion surveys show that although many Grenadians despise the former Prime Minister, Gairy can still count on loyal followers among businessmen, the poor, the elderly, and especially in the rural areas which were his party's traditional strength. The GULP campaign got an early edge because of the months of moderate squabbling and disorganization. Moreover, Gairy's organization has conducted a relatively strong and well-organized effort. []

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The MBPM, formed in May, represents the less radical faction of the New Jewel Movement (NJM), which ruled Grenada from its 1979 coup until the US-led military intervention in October

¹ See Appendix A for a detailed description of these parties. []

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1983.² The MBPM's leaders--former government ministers Kendrick Radix and George Louison--have focused on the memory of the charismatic Bishop to rally support for their campaign. We believe--based on US Embassy assessments [redacted]

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[redacted]--that most Bishop followers were badly discredited following the demise of the Bishop government and that the MBPM has no significant popular support. [redacted]

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[redacted] the MBPM has no more than a few hundred followers and that many of these are personal friends and family of Bishop and the seven other government leaders killed last October. [redacted] leftist supporters are sitting the election out. Although it is unlikely to win any seats, the MBPM nonetheless appears to view the election as an opportunity to gain legitimacy, and the party is fielding 13 candidates. [redacted]

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Other participants in the election include five candidates from Winston Whyte's Christian Democratic Labor Party (CDLP) and four independent candidates. Whyte--a political detainee under the Bishop regime--has only a limited base of support and probably can only count on a small number of votes in his hometown. The four independent candidates are unlikely to be a factor in the election outcome because they are relatively unknown. [redacted]

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Election Outlook

We believe--based on the results of public opinion polls conducted in Grenada by a reputable Trinidadian firm--that Grenadians are primarily concerned that the election produce a government with strong and effective leadership, capable of maintaining political stability. In this context, the campaign has revolved around personalities and party loyalties more than

² The radical faction--reorganizing under the NJM banner--is composed of those who support former deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard, facing trial for the murder of former Prime Minister Bishop. The group's spokesman, former Central Committee member Ian St. Bernard, has announced that the NJM will boycott the election on grounds that Grenada is under foreign military domination. [redacted]

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substantive issues. As a small island-state with a simple society, the issues that concern the populace are fairly basic. According to the poll conducted in October, Grenadians identified high unemployment and political turmoil as the primary problems they want the new government to solve. Respondents also indicated that they are concerned about the island's deteriorated infrastructure and the rising cost of living. The polling organization concluded that victory at the polls depends on the ability of the competing parties to persuade the public that they can provide competent leadership to solve Grenada's problems.

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NNP Strengths

The NNP seems to have focused more effectively on these issues than its principal rival. Campaigning under the theme of "peace, stability, and prosperity," the coalition has attempted to emphasize its commitment to democratic government and to the improvement of economic and social conditions. Public rallies by the NNP have also tried to highlight the leadership qualities of the party's candidates and detail the party's programs for economic recovery. The GULP, on the other hand generally has emphasized Gairy's reputation for promoting the interest of the "little man" and has claimed that a Gairy administration will maintain close ties with the United States.

We believe--based on reporting from the US Embassy, [redacted] and the poll results--that the NNP will win a strong majority of the 15 seats at stake in the election. The remainder, at least two seats and perhaps as many as five, probably will go to Gairy's party.³ The results of the polls--conducted in August and October--demonstrate that since its inception, the NNP has significantly increased its popularity and support. By mid-October, the NNP had gained a high level of recognition among voters and was rated the leading party--with 48 percent support compared to GULP's 31 percent--among likely voters. The polling organization found that candidates from the MBPM and CDLP would get between 1-5 percent with the remainder of the sample undecided. Blaize was the preferred leader among those interviewed, receiving high marks for honesty, integrity, compassion, and intelligence. The NNP was regarded as more

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³ For a detailed projection of probable electoral results by constituency, see Appendix B. [redacted]

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likely to provide effective leadership and find solutions to Grenada's problems than was the GULP. The results of the poll have been supported by reporting from the US Embassy [REDACTED]

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As the NNP's popularity has increased, Gairy's support seems to have declined. The results of the August survey--when the NNP was being formed--showed Gairy with about 44 percent of the vote. Two months later, support for the GULP had dropped to 31 percent. US Embassy reporting indicates that before the NNP was formed, many Grenadians had swung their support to Gairy when it looked as if the GULP might win the election because they feared possible retribution for not backing the former Prime Minister. According to US Embassy officials, many Grenadians do not want to vote for a party that is unlikely to win, and, as recent trends become clearer to the populace, support for Gairy is likely to decrease further. [REDACTED]

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The polls found that about one-third of those likely to vote had not yet decided which party to support. In our view, this share is overstated. We believe--based on US Embassy reporting and the poll findings--that many respondents may have been reluctant to express anti-Gairy views or to reveal their intentions because of general suspicions about the purpose of the poll. In addition, according to the analysis of the polling organization, most would-be GULP voters have already committed themselves, and thus Gairy's support is unlikely to increase much. We judge, therefore, that most undecided voters represent potential NNP supporters and that many of these will cast ballots on election day. Moreover, if the trend of growing support for the NNP continues until election day, the GULP will be hard pressed to win more than one of two seats. [REDACTED]

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NNP Vulnerabilities

The recent momentum of the NNP and the strength of its election mandate could yet be diminished by organizational and financial problems in its campaign. The organizational problems appear to stem from Blaize's weak leadership and the absence of a single national-level manager to run the campaign. Reporting from US Embassy officials indicates that Blaize insists on maintaining unilateral control over the coalition but seems to be running the campaign inefficiently. As a result, the campaign lacks adequate publicity, cohesiveness, and a centralized strategy. The strength of the coalition also is being undermined by Blaize's apparent determination to gain a predominant position

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for his party. According to US Embassy reporting, Blaize has refused to drop two loyal members of the GNP who are running on the NNP slate, even though his coalition partners believe these candidates cannot win. Embassy officials also comment that Blaize's complacency about the NNP's election chances could hurt the effectiveness of the campaign. So far, however, active campaigning and cooperation among candidates from the NDP and GDM have alleviated some organization and leadership problems. [REDACTED]

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The organizational problems are compounded by shortages of campaign funds. US Embassy officials report that although NNP rallies throughout the island have been well-attended, the gatherings have been hampered by poor lighting, barely audible sound systems, and the lack of campaign material. NNP leaders have voiced concern to Embassy officials that the lack of funds for field workers, transportation, and publicity may seriously hurt their election chances. [REDACTED]

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By contrast, Gairy was able to mobilize his party apparatus fairly easily when he returned to Grenada last January, and his candidates were out on the street campaigning shortly thereafter. Because Gairy and the GULP ruled Grenada for over 20 years, they were well-known throughout the island and had an organizational structure in place. Although Gairy has not held any political rallies because he fears assassination, the GULP has conducted a strong, well-organized door-to-door campaign. According to US Embassy reporting, GULP politicking has been successful, and Gairy has been able to rely on the loyalty of his followers and the field work of party members to expand his support base. US Embassy officials also report that early in his campaign, Gairy extorted money and other support from many Grenadian businessmen afraid of the consequences of not backing the GULP leader should he win the election. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Gairy nonetheless appears to have adequate funding from friends in Grenada, Trinidad, and the United States. [REDACTED]

Post-Election Challenges and Prospects

Prospects for stability and a return to democratic rule in Grenada will depend on the strength and unity of the newly elected government. The recent opinion poll indicates that the electorate has high expectations of the government to solve pressing economic issues. In addition to the pressures of these high expectations, the new leaders will face several stiff

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challenges after assuming office--rebuilding the government bureaucracy, restructuring the economy, overseeing the establishment of a new police force, and bringing to justice the 19 radicals accused of murdering Bishop last year. Without governmental cohesion and a strong electoral mandate, the country's fragile economic and political recovery could stall.

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The most difficult challenge facing the new government will be revitalization of the economy. We believe that foreign investment is essential to lay the groundwork for sustained recovery since a large portion of domestic revenue is allocated for other uses and the tiny private sector is too small to provide much investment. Increased capital outlays, particularly in tourism, agribusiness, and light manufacturing would spur growth, expand the island's export earnings, and help reduce the island's high unemployment. The improved political and economic climate already has aroused foreign investor interest, but only two of the 26 investment projects approved so far have been implemented.

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A major factor inhibiting a rapid inflow of investment is Grenada's weak infrastructure. We believe that the electricity supply, road and telecommunications networks, and the water and sewage systems need to be significantly upgraded for Grenada to compete effectively with larger Caribbean countries in attracting foreign investment. Further improvements in Grenada's investment code as well as cuts in business and trade taxes would also help attract investment to the island. Much also remains to be done to make the fledgling domestic business sector an engine of growth, including further divestiture of state firms and overall fiscal reform.

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In our judgment, the new Grenadian government is likely to encounter several political problems in the coming months that could seriously undermine its effectiveness. US Embassy reporting indicates that basic disagreements persist within the NNP on political strategy and power sharing. NDP and GDM members have tended to give in to Blaize's arbitrary decisions to preserve the coalition's fragile unity and expedite campaign progress. These differences would likely resurface should the NNP come to power.

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Moreover, the NNP probably will encounter obstructionist tactics from GULP members inside the Parliament and, perhaps, in the streets because Gairy is likely to use his support base to

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[redacted]

encourage opposition to the new government. As he did in 1962--when he lost the election to Blaize's GNP--we believe that Gairy will continue to campaign beyond this year's election, seizing opportunities to exploit unmet popular expectations. Because Gairy retains sizable support in Grenada, he could cause problems for the new government, which will be seeking a broad consensus to implement much needed economic and political reforms. [redacted]

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Although an outright victory for Gairy's party is unlikely in our view, the GULP could win a parliamentary majority if the NNP coalition fell apart prior to election day. A Gairy government would almost certainly mark a return to a repressive and corrupt political system, an outcome which would discredit the multinational intervention and severely undercut US credibility in the region. We believe an immediate effect of such an outcome could be the withdrawal of Caribbean participants in the multinational peacekeeping force on the island. Gairy almost certainly would resurrect some version of his infamous "Mongoose Gang," a group of thugs that served as his private army when he was Prime Minister. [redacted]

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Over the longer term, a victory by Gairy would provoke an upsurge in social unrest and political violence in much the same way as occurred during his earlier regime. Political instability would likely be exacerbated by economic decline as foreign investors and tourists looked for a more secure environment. At a minimum, however, we believe that a Gairy victory would provide Grenadian leftists a strong rallying point for generating renewed support. [redacted]

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Cuban Support for the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement

Opportunities for a leftist resurgence could also occur if the NNP coalition wins but is unable to make progress in resolving Grenada's problems. At this juncture, the MBPM's only hope of regaining support appears to be linked to a failure of the new government to meet popular expectations. Such an outcome would provide an opportunity for the Cuban-backed MBPM to foment unrest and cultivate support. [redacted]

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Cuban support for the MBPM has been underway since the multinational intervention in Grenada last year. [redacted]

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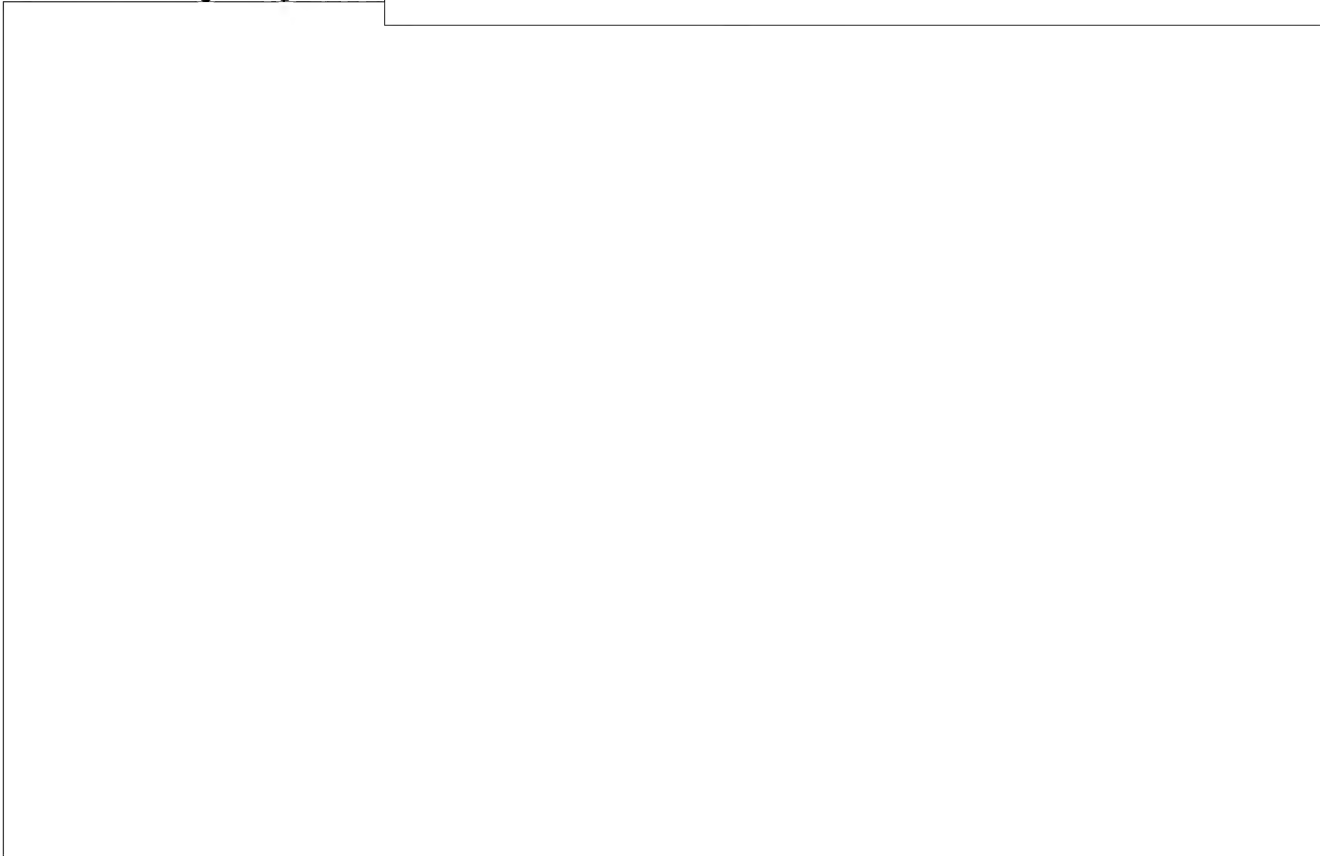


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Havana also has continued to sponsor scholarships for approximately 120 Grenadian students, who were sent to Cuba under the Bishop regime.



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Appendix A

The Major Contending Parties

The New National Party (NNP)

The Grenada National Party (GNP)

Involved in Grenadian politics since the 1950s as the traditional opposition party to Eric Gairy's GULP, the GNP is the most conservative of the political parties of the moderate center. As chairman of the NNP, the 66 year old Herbert Blaize would become Prime Minister if the coalition wins the election. Blaize is generally perceived as a man of integrity and experience, according to US Embassy reporting, and is almost assured of winning his traditional constituency seat in Carriacou. Although Blaize and his party bring the most experience to the centrist alliance, US Embassy reporting indicates that the GNP has a narrow support base--mostly among the middle and upper classes. Moreover, some Grenadians have criticized the viability of the party because of its past uninspiring political performance and the frail health of Blaize--who is crippled by arthritis. According to the US Embassy, GNP leaders, in seeming to overestimate their popularity, have tended to be stubborn and self-righteous in dealing with the NDP and the GDM.

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The National Democratic Party (NDP)

Drawing support from the business community in the capital of St. Georges, the NDP was formed in January 1984 hoping to establish a broad base of support. The NDP seems to be the most popular of the centrist parties, according to US Embassy reporting and several public opinion polls. The party is led by 42-year old George Brizan, a former teacher and government education officer. According to US Embassy officials, Brizan is liked by many of the students he has taught, has support in the civil service, and has financial backing from members of the business sector. According to the US Embassy, however, Brizan is politically inexperienced and has been accused of weakness by some Grenadian political observers who say that he compromises too easily. While Brizan seems to lack the dynamism desired by most Grenadians in their political leaders, he nevertheless is appealing to many Grenadians for his down-to-earth nature, according to Embassy reporting. Moreover, Brizan has acted to broaden his base of support by advocating some of the more

popular social welfare policies of the Bishop regime and calling for the integration of former NJM and PRA members into society. These actions have caused some opponents to accuse the NDP of being communist. Despite Brizan's appeal to youths and the strong support he enjoys in St. Georges, we believe he must also develop support among rural Grenadians--which form the bulk of the population--before the NDP can become a major party. [REDACTED]

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The Grenada Democratic Movement (GDM)

A former exile organization based in Trinidad and Tobago and the United States during the Bishop regime, the GDM is led by 37-year old professor and lawyer Francis Alexis. The GDM and its youthful, well-educated leaders are largely unknown in Grenada and so far have had little impact, according to the US Embassy. Moreover, Embassy reporting indicates the party's credibility has suffered from criticism by many Grenadians who resent the return of GDM members from exile only after the US-led intervention. In our judgment, although the GDM currently does not represent a viable political party, its leaders have a variety of skills and expertise that could benefit the coalition. GDM leaders probably hope that the alliance with Blaize in the NNP will improve their image. We believe the party has been willing to accept a minority role in the coalition because its leaders perceive that they could not win any electoral seats on their own. [REDACTED]

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Eric Gairy and the Grenada United Labor Party (GULP)

In the early 1950s, Gairy formed the GULP and rose to power by skillfully exploiting the class divisions in Grenadian society. By capitalizing on the animosity of the peasant and labor classes toward the wealthy and politically dominant elite, Gairy built a substantial power base among the rural poor. Once in office, however, Gairy became obsessed with power and his own self-aggrandizement. His erratic administration in the 1960s and 1970s was marked by gross mismanagement and neglect of the country's finances, according to Embassy reporting. [REDACTED]

Gairy built support largely on party patronage, abused the privileges of office in order to consolidate power, and amassed personal wealth. He became infamous throughout the Caribbean for his flamboyance and preoccupation with mysticism and extraterrestrial activity. A skillful demagogue, Gairy used money and force to retain the roots of power long after popular discontent to his rule had taken root. Thus, when he was finally forced from power by Bishop and a small band of armed

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accomplices, public opinion strongly favored the illegal coup.

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When Gairy returned from exile in the United States about a year ago, he encountered widespread animosity from a cross-section of the Grenadian population--mostly in the middle and upper classes and among youths. He, nonetheless, was able to revitalize his party, and GULP candidates began campaigning long before the moderates were ready. According to the US Embassy, the GULP gained support primarily by resorting to its past strong-arm tactics of manipulation and buying votes. Embassy officials believe that Gairy remains essentially unchanged despite his five-year absence from power. In a series of interviews, Gairy's rambling conversations led the US officials to question his stability.

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Appendix B

Constituency Forecast of the Election

Using statistical probability analysis, we have estimated the likely outcome of the December election in each of the 15 districts. The probabilities assigned to these estimates are confidence levels based on the number of persons interviewed in each district in August and mid-October by a reputable Trinidadian polling firm. The analysis indicates that the NNP is likely to win at least nine seats, the GULP could win as many as five, and one constituency is too close to call. If the present trend of declining support for the GULP continues, however, the NNP could win a larger majority of the seats.

<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Likely Winning Party</u>
St. Georges City	NNP (95-100%)
St. Georges NE	NNP (95-100%)
St. Georges South	GULP (80-85%)
St. Georges NW	NNP (95-100%)
St. Georges SE	NNP (95-100%)
St. Andrew SE	NNP (80-85%)
St. Andrew SW	NNP (95-100%)
St. Andrew NE	GULP (95-100%)
St. Andrew NW	GULP (75-80%)
St. Patrick East	NNP (90-95%)
St. Patrick West	GULP (90-95%)
St. John	Too Close to Call
St. David	NNP (95-100%)
St. Mark	GULP (95-100%)
Carriacou	NNP (95-100%)

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